

One constituent, Robert, told me about how he and his wife lost nearly 60 percent of their retirement funds. They have no pensions, no 401(k)s, and no health care coverage.

Another constituent told me how he lost his job 4 months ago and is now drowning in college loans and bills. These stories are all too common.

Every one of us is feeling the effects of the economic downturn. But I, along with my colleagues in Congress, will advocate for you and your family's needs every day.

EARMARKS ARE ESSENTIALLY NO-BID CONTRACTS

(Mr. FLAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we passed an omnibus spending bill with more than 8,600 earmarks. Many of them are simply wasteful, including 1.8 million to combat swine odor in Iowa. Maybe that could have been spent a little closer to home.

But a lot of these earmarks, a few thousand of them, have the potential to be far more damaging to this institution because they are essentially no-bid contracts. In many cases, they're no-bid contracts to those who turn out to be campaign contributors to Members who secured the no-bid contract.

We have to ask ourselves, is this proper for the House to do? Should the House of Representatives allow its Members to award no-bid contracts to their campaign contributors? It doesn't seem right, Mr. Speaker. We owe this institution far better than that, and we ought to stop the practice.

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Mr. BACA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BACA. America recently elected not just the first African American to serve as President but also the son of an immigrant. Yet, the positive contributions of immigrants never seem to make it through the smoke of politics that blurs the issue of immigrant reform.

We must not forget that we are a Nation built by immigrants. Today, there are 12 to 14 million undocumented, hardworking immigrants contributing to our economy.

As we struggle to rebuild our economy, we must not forget that a comprehensive immigration reform is needed to bring out of the shadows hardworking immigrants. We must make sure that all workers are on a level of playing field and that the exploitation of undocumented immigrant workers ends.

We must make sure that unscrupulous employers are punished and that families are respected.

I urge my colleagues to work with me and for the President to keep his

word and work towards comprehensive immigration reform.

BANK BAILOUT BLUNDER—NORTHERN TRUST

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Chicago-based bank Northern Trust took \$1.6 billion in bailout money. But last week the bank threw a high-dollar party in Los Angeles. The celebration included flying in guests and employees to stay at the Ritz and the Beverly Hills Wilshire.

The bank hosted a \$6.3 million fancy golf tournament. Northern Trust partied all week by entertaining the rich and famous.

Nightly concerts were held that included the groups Earth, Wind and Fire, Chicago, and even singer Sheryl Crow.

One night, the bank rented the entire establishment of the House of Blues for \$50,000 to enjoy the necessities of life.

When it was all over, the party animals received Tiffany gift bags. A good time was had by all.

Mr. Speaker, corporations can do what they want with their own money, but when banks take taxpayer money, they are responsible to the taxpayers. The bank says they didn't ask for the money. Well, if that's so, the bank should do the right thing. Northern Trust, give us back our \$1.6 billion because you can't be trusted with our money.

The bank blunder bailout loan has come due.

And that's just the way it is.

NATIONAL PEACE CORPS WEEK

(Mr. SIREs asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate National Peace Corps Week and to honor the agency's 48th anniversary. Since the Peace Corps began in 1961, over 195,000 volunteers have served in 139 countries around the globe. Currently, there are over 7,800 Peace Corps volunteers serving in 76 countries, including two of my constituents.

Jaskirat Singh is currently serving in Jordan until September 2010, and Antoinette Day is currently serving in Bulgaria. I am incredibly proud of their service and the lasting contributions they are making to improve the lives of people in the communities where they are serving.

I would like to commend all the Peace Corps volunteers for their dedicated service to our Nation and for expanding and creating new opportunities for people in the developing world.

REAUTHORIZATION OF E-VERIFY

(Mr. CALVERT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because 7 months from now the E-Verify program will expire. It is unacceptable that Congress continues to kick the can down the road on E-Verify. Last Congress, I along with 406 other Members of Congress, voted to extend E-Verify for 4 years. It was a bipartisan bill that had the overwhelming support of Members, as well as the American public. Congresswoman GIFFORDS and I have introduced the same legislation this Congress, H.R. 662.

Let's be clear: Reauthorization of E-Verify is not immigration reform. The existing voluntary program is the only way for employers to ensure that they are complying with existing law, which requires them to hire a legal workforce. Extending the voluntary program will also provide certainty to the 106,000 users of the system, including the States of Arizona and Mississippi, that E-Verify will continue to be available.

So why do we find ourselves counting down to an expiration date? Because there are certain special interests that may try to leverage E-Verify for a so-called comprehensive immigration reform bill.

We cannot allow the reauthorization of E-Verify to be tied up in a battle over an amnesty bill. Let's bring the bipartisan reauthorization of E-Verify through regular order and give the American people, and the thousands of E-Verify users, the assurance that employment verification will continue to be available.

HONORING THOSE WHO HAVE DEPARTED

(Mr. HASTINGS of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest privileges we have in the House of Representatives is an opportunity to come before this body and take cognizance of the extraordinary work of people in our constituency throughout the United States. When they depart life, very occasionally we come here to say something about it.

In the last 2 months, Fletcher Gibson, Ronald Dallas, Pat Larkins, and Andrew DeGraffenreidt, constituents and personal friends, some fraternity brothers of mine, have departed this life.

I take this opportunity that's given to us by our citizenry to express my condolences to their families. Each in their own way were legendary, iconic figures in Broward County, and I deeply appreciate the service they gave to humankind, and I honor them and offer condolences to their families.

HELPING FAMILIES SAVE THEIR HOMES ACT

(Mr. SMITH of Nebraska asked and was given permission to address the